

APPENDIX E

AGENCY WILDLIFE MITIGATION PLAN

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Agency Wildlife Mitigation Plan for the West Tavaputs Plateau

The Price Field Office, in coordination with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), is giving careful consideration to Bill Barrett Corporation's (BBC) and other operators' Wildlife Mitigation Plan (hereinafter referred to as the operator's plan), which outlines proposed mitigation for natural gas full field development on the West Tavaputs Plateau (WTP). The proposed plan is developed to mitigate potential effects specifically to wildlife resources that cannot be avoided or reduced. The agencies, however, in response to the operator proposed plan, are evaluating alternative combinations of measures with emphasis on compensatory means of mitigation.

The primary objective of the operators' plan is to address effects of development activities proposed to occur during seasonal closures, while the agencies' alternative plan emphasizes the importance of offsetting, to the extent reasonable, the effects of the full field development in its entirety. The agencies' plan gives priority to compensating for potential effects to greater sage-grouse, deer, raptors, and elk.

Another key objective of the agencies' plan carries forward the operators' commitment to mitigate at a 4:1 acre ratio based on total potential long-term surface disturbance. This ratio generally serves as the limitation on the extent to which operators would be required to mitigate.

As is proposed by the operators, 30 percent of the total potential long-term surface disturbance would be mitigated during the first three years following a decision to authorize the full field development project. As part of this initial effort, the following measures¹ would be implemented:

- Habitat improvement and connectivity as described in the operators' plan. This would be implemented at a 4:1 ratio as indicated above.
- Wet meadow/summer range enhancement as described in the operators' plan. Up to six projects would be implemented. Acres enhanced would be counted under the habitat improvement tally at an equal or greater acreage value based on the qualitative benefits of the enhancement.
- The operators would contribute to UDWR for monitoring greater sage-grouse, whether the continued telemetry study or other, more aggressive means of monitoring, if necessary, including experimental designs.

The agency alternative mitigation plan would also establish an oversight committee to be led by the BLM, in coordination with UDWR, other agencies, and the operators. The WTP Mitigation Oversight Committee (WTPMOC), consistent with the operators' plan, would evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of mitigation measures, provide direction on effective means of mitigating planned development activities, and develop adaptive strategies and projects to mitigate beyond the initial 30 percent commitment. All mitigation commitments (i.e., the remaining 70%) under the Agency Wildlife Mitigation Plan would be initiated within one year from completion of drilling operations.

¹ Some of the measures proposed by the operators not carried forward into the agency wildlife mitigation plan are incorporated elsewhere in the EIS alternatives as general alternative components.

The WTPMOC would include, or at least invite to participate, a representative from a local sage-grouse working group, an area landowner, and representatives from Carbon, Uintah, and Duchesne Counties. The WTPMOC would complete evaluations and make determinations on on-going and planned mitigation activities on an annual basis, in advance of considerations for winter activities (as is outlined under Alternatives C and E), and prepare a report on its findings. As appropriate, the WTPMOC would use information and principles from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts, and Castle Country Adaptive Resource Management Local Working Group to guide mitigation strategies for sage-grouse.

Adaptive strategies beyond the operators' initial commitment could include a broad menu of mitigation options. The relative value of the various options would be determined by the WTPMOC such that their value can be applied toward the operators' 4:1 mitigation requirement.

- Mitigation options which would be considered by the WTPMOC for implementation of the plan include, but are not limited to, the following actions:
- Additional habitat improvement and connectivity projects. A variety of methods could be used, targeting a range of vegetative communities and habitats, including wet meadow/summer range;
- Continued or more aggressive monitoring of greater sage-grouse, including experimental designs;
- Conversions of grazing allotments in and around Nine Mile Canyon from domestic sheep (this could provide for the reintroduction of bighorn sheep into Nine Mile Canyon);
- The purchase of conservation easements on private lands; and
- Management of private lands for the benefit of wildlife.

The WTPMOC would recognize, within the 4:1 parameter, mitigation activities on Federal, State, and private lands, including those which build upon or complement past commitments by operators to mitigate activities authorized under previous analyses and associated decisions. However, credit for previous project mitigation would not be allowed within the 4:1 parameter. In addition, the WTPMOC would consider the potential for future natural gas development (as well as multiple other factors) within areas being considered for mitigation.